

# SOCIOLOGY OF THE MASS MEDIA

## SOC 554

### COURSE SYLLABUS SUMMER II 2007

#### Course Information:

**Meeting Place:** 209 Bailey Hall

**Meeting Times:** Monday through Friday, 9:55–11:40 am

#### Instructor Information:

**Instructor:** Dr. Alan Barton

**Office:** 37 Ward Hall or 214 Kethley Hall

**Telephone:** (662) 846-4097

**E-mail:** [abarton@deltastate.edu](mailto:abarton@deltastate.edu)

**Webpage:** [http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp\\_academic/abarton/](http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp_academic/abarton/)

#### Office Hours:

The instructor holds regular office hours at the following times:

Monday through Friday, 2:00 – 4:00 pm

If you cannot make one of these times, contact the professor to set up an appointment.

#### Course Webpage:

Additional materials and updated course information can be found on the course webpage:

[http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp\\_academic/abarton/SOC454SUII07/SOC554Syllabus.htm](http://ntweb.deltastate.edu/vp_academic/abarton/SOC454SUII07/SOC554Syllabus.htm)

#### Course Overview:

This course examines the mass media as a social institution. In an era of globalization, it is increasingly crucial to view the mass media through the lens of sociology. In recent years, sociologists have studied significant changes in public policy that regulates the mass media, concentration of ownership of traditional mass media, and technological innovations that have given rise to new forms of mass media. The ramifications of these changes are far reaching. Using books, videos, articles and class projects, we will seek to understand these changes and how they effect various groups in American and global society.

Prerequisites: SOC 101 or permission of instructor.

#### Readings:

##### *Required Books:*

Noam Chomsky. 2002. *Media Control: The Spectacular Achievements of Propaganda*. Second Edition. Open Media Series/Seven Stories Press, New York. ISBN: 1583225366.

David R. Croteau and William Hoynes. 2002. *Media/Society: Industries, Images, and Audiences*. Third Edition. Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA. ISBN: 9780761987734.

Jean Kilbourne. 2000. *Can't Buy My Love: How Advertising Changes the Way We Think and Feel*. Free Press, New York. ISBN: 0684866005

Robert McChesney. 2004. *The Problem of the Media: U.S. Communication Politics in the Twenty-First Century*. Monthly Review Press, New York. ISBN: 1583671056.

Eric Klinenberg. 2007. *Fighting for Air: The Battle to Control America's Media*. Metropolitan Books, New York. ISBN: 0805078193.

The books are available at the university bookstore and from a variety of on-line booksellers. You should purchase these books or otherwise arrange to complete the reading assignments from these books.

The Course Outline below lists the reading assignments for each class meeting; you should do the assigned reading BEFORE the class meeting for which it is assigned.

## Course Objectives:

Once you successfully complete this course, you will be able to:

- (1) Describe the structure of the U.S. and global media, and how the structure affects the content of the media
- (2) Identify the basic functions of the media in modern society, and describe the role of the media in democratic societies
- (3) Explain how the structure and functions of the media have changed over the years, and how these changes have influenced society
- (4) Describe how the media relates to power structures in society, and what interests the media represent in given situations
- (5) Critically evaluate the content of a media product, and draw inferences about its manifest and latent meaning
- (6) Explain how advertising operates in the media today, and identify positive and negative consequences of advertising on our culture

These objectives contribute to overall course goals:

- (1) Developing **critical thinking skills**. The class discussions, readings, writing assignments and exams are designed to encourage you to develop and use higher-order thinking skills, including analytical, synthetic and applied thinking.
- (2) Understanding the **social structures and processes** that condition our lives. A basic goal of all sociology courses is to help you understand the nature and workings of these social structures, and how they open opportunities and impose constraints on individuals operating within these structures. C. Wright Mills called this using your "sociological imagination," activities in this course are designed to encourage you to use *your* sociological imagination.

## Concepts and Questions:

This course examines several concepts in detail. Sociological concepts addressed include:

Symbols  
Technology

Gender  
Power

Post-modernism  
Deconstruction

Social Change  
Globalization  
Social Construction  
of Knowledge

Citizenship  
Ethic of Responsibility  
Meaning  
Hegemony

Social Structure  
Agency  
Path Dependence  
Images

This course addresses several important questions, including:

How does technology lead to social change in the modern world?

Who owns the mass media and how are the mass media organized? In what ways does the ownership and organization affect media content?

What effect do the media have on the political, economic and social climate in the U.S. and the world?

What role does advertising play in the media? What are some of the effects of advertising on people and society?

Are there alternative ways to organize the media?

### **Course Organization and Approach:**

This course uses a participatory, learner-centered, adult education approach. An adult education approach recognizes that you are responsible for your own learning. The professor can only provide opportunities to learn, but cannot force you to learn. You are expected to work hard in this course, meaning that for every hour of class time, you should spend two to three hours outside of class preparing by doing readings, assignments, studying for quizzes and exams, and thinking about the course material.

You are expected to take responsibility for the success of the course, that is, you should take an active interest not just in the course material, but in the course itself, making it a success for all participants. Factors such as interest, motivation, creativity, and initiative are important elements in evaluating your performance and assigning a grade.

Some of the types of activities you will be engaged in during this course include:

- **Class discussion:** About half of the time in the class is spent in discussion on concepts introduced in the readings and by the professor. Discussion may be in small groups or with the entire class. You are expected to participate in these discussions regularly.
- **Reading:** There is a substantial amount of reading in this class, which you are expected to do outside of class time. You must come to class having completed the reading, ready to discuss the material.
- **Research:** You will conduct an original research project in this class, carried out outside of the classroom, under specific guidelines set up at the beginning of the semester. This is a great opportunity to develop research skills.
- **Writing:** You will write a paper based on your research project, and will submit the paper at the end of the semester.
- **Watching Videos:** We will show videos during the semester, to gain a broader perspective and to hear experts on the mass media speak. You are expected to pay attention and learn from the videos.

*"Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances."*

*~First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution*

## Learning Opportunities:

- (1) **Attendance/Participation in Class Discussions** (20 points)
  - You are expected to do all of the assigned readings and attend all class sessions
  - Be sure to sign the attendance sheet at each class session; your attendance will not be registered if you do not sign the sheet
  - Any effort to falsify information on the attendance sheet will be treated as a case of academic dishonesty
- (2) **Content Analysis** (30 points)
  - You will select one form of mass media, and a topic of interest, and conduct a content analysis in which you analyze HOW the media cover the topic
  - You will prepare and submit a paper in which you describe the content analysis; the paper should be about 12 pages, and is due on July 27

***See the course website for additional information on conducting the Content Analysis and writing the paper***

- (3) **Reading the Media** (20 points)
  - You will select a newspaper article or audio or video news clip and critically review its content, applying the concepts used in the course
  - Select an article from a major newspaper, a video clip from a major broadcaster, or an audio clip from a local radio station; your selection should be from the week in which you present your review; articles should be about 10 paragraphs, and clips should be about 5 minutes
  - Your analysis should consider **how** the topic is covered, taking into account framing, point of view, interests of various parties (author, publisher, editor), ownership of the medium, and ramifications of the coverage; **BE CRITICAL!**
  - Bring the content to class; you will have approximately 15 minutes to present and analyze the material; If you have a newspaper article, bring enough copies for everyone in class
- (4) **Book Review** (30 points)
  - You will review the book *Fighting for Air: The Battle to Control America's Media*
  - The book is available at the University Bookstore
  - Your review should be 3–4 pages, and should highlight the sociological aspects of the book; The review is due on July 25
  - During the last week of classes, you will discuss the book on a panel with other graduate students in the course
- (5) **Critical Engagement** (±10 points)
  - The instructor can add or subtract a total of 10 points from your final grade to reflect the degree of engagement in the course that you exhibit
  - Engaged students demonstrate qualities such as motivation, extra effort, interest in the course material, leadership, improvement over the course of the semester, and a professional approach to their studies
  - Lack of engagement is manifested by frequent absences, talking with others or dozing off in class, lack of interest in the course material, lack of preparation, and infrequent participation in course activities

*"Freedom of conscience, of education, of speech, of assembly are among the very fundamentals of democracy and all of them would be nullified should freedom of the press ever be successfully challenged."*

*~Franklin D. Roosevelt*

## Grading:

There are a total of 100 points available for the semester. Your final score is simply the sum of all points earned over the semester.

If you accumulate 92 or more points over the course of the semester, you will get an “A” in the course. If you accumulate 84 to 91 points, you will get a “B,” for 76 to 83 points you will get a “C,” and for 68 to 75 points will get a “D.” If you get less than 68 points, your final grade will be an “F.” Note that you start with zero and earn points; you do not start with 100 and lose points.

If you comply with all course requirements and submit all of the assignments satisfactorily and on time, you can expect a “B” in this course. To receive a higher grade, you must demonstrate a superior grasp of course material and an ability to apply the material in productive ways. It is also helpful to show an interest in the course material and in learning, and an achievement-based orientation.

## Policies and Expectations:

- (1) **YOU are responsible** for learning the course material and for your progress in the course
  - You are expected to **attend class regularly**. An attendance sheet will be passed around at every class session. **Make sure you sign the attendance sheet at each class meeting** – this will serve as the official record of attendance, and if your name is not on the sheet, you will not receive credit for attending on that date.
  - You are expected to **complete all of the assignments** and know **all** material presented during class sessions, whether you attended the class or not. If you miss a class session, you should check with another student to see what you missed.
  - “I didn’t know” is **NEVER** a valid excuse. If you don’t know something, it is your job to find out.
- (2) Missed assignments **CANNOT** be made up
  - It is assumed that if you miss class or an assignment, you are making a choice that prioritizes other activities above the class. For this reason, **none of the assignments or coursework can be made up**.
  - Assignments are due at the time specified; **no late assignments will be accepted**.
  - If you miss an exam or writing assignment, you will receive a grade of zero for that assignment. You are not required to turn a writing assignment in every week, but cannot make up assignments if you do not turn in the required number by the end of the semester.
  - If you must miss a presentation or other in-class activity, it is up to you to arrange to trade with another student before the event. Please notify the instructor of such changes. Points will be **deducted** from your grade if you simply do not show up for a presentation.
- (3) Illnesses and emergencies **MUST** be documented
  - If you must miss a class due to illness or another personal emergency, notify the instructor **BEFORE** the missed class period either by e-mail or telephone.
  - If you cannot notify the instructor in advance, bring a note from a doctor or other professional to the next class meeting.
  - Illnesses and emergencies pertain **only** to the student, not to the student’s family, friends or others.
  - If you must miss class for an official university activity, you should make arrangements with the instructor **BEFORE** the missed class. Appropriate documentation is required.

- Notified absences (i.e. you notify the instructor before the event) count as one-half absence. Excused absences (i.e. you bring a note from a doctor or other professional) will not count against you for the first two; after that, each excused absence counts as one-half absence.
  - Unexcused absences will be scored on a sliding scale, as shown **here**.
  - You are responsible for all material presented in the class, even during an excused absence. You should get class notes from another student for all class sessions you miss.
  - It is in your interest to provide the instructor with **written** notification (e.g. note or e-mail) or documentation for any missed class. It is risky to simply tell the instructor and expect him to remember.
- (4) Class **discussion** is an important element in this course
- The purpose of the discussion is to provide you with an opportunity to practice thinking skills in a safe environment.
  - In discussions, you are encouraged to explore ideas presented in the readings and lectures, to think about and apply concepts, and to develop arguments and evaluate evidence.
  - You must demonstrate **appropriate respect** the opinions and ideas of other students. If you repeatedly show disrespect for other students, you will be asked to leave the classroom.
  - Class discussions are **NOT** a time to chat with other students about topics not related to the course. Talking privately with other students while the rest of the class is trying to carry on a discussion is disruptive, bothersome, and disrespectful to other students and to the professor. If you repeatedly talk out of turn, you will be asked to leave the classroom.
  - It is acceptable (and encouraged) to disagree with the perspectives of other students, but you should phrase this to show disagreement with the idea or opinion, not with the person presenting the idea or opinion.
  - Please make sure that all pagers, cell phones, etc. are **turned off** during class time. If your phone or pager repeatedly interrupts class, you will be asked to leave the classroom.
  - Any work missed by a student that was asked to leave the classroom **cannot** be made up under any circumstances.
- (5) You are expected to **comply with all academic standards and ethics** as defined in the DSU Bulletin and Handbook
- You are expected to do their own work in this course. Plagiarism and other forms of cheating will **NOT** be tolerated.
  - **Click here if you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism.** The DSU Library's "**Plagiarism Prevention: A Guide for Students**" is also a good resource. If it is still unclear, see the instructor. **IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY TO UNDERSTAND THESE GUIDELINES.** If at some point in the semester you are suspected of committing plagiarism, pleas of "I didn't know what plagiarism was" will not be accepted.
  - The sanctions for plagiarism are outlined on the web page linked above. Make sure you are aware of these **BEFORE** you submit any work in this class.
- (6) **DO NOT** bring cell phones or other portable communication devices to class during quizzes, exams, or in-class assignments. If the instructor sees a cell phone or other device during a quiz, exam or in-class assignment, your work will be collected immediately and you will be asked to leave the classroom.
- (7) Appropriate accommodations will be made for students with medical problems or diagnosed disabilities. Have Dr. Richard Houston at the Reily Health Center (846-4690) contact the course instructor to make arrangements.

**Course Outline:**

Day/Date	Topic	Assignment	Readings
<b>Week 1: Sociology and the Mass Media</b>			
Mon. 7/2	Introduction, Course Syllabus		
	Basics of Sociology		
Tue. 7/3	Perspectives on the Media	Evaluation: Pre-Test	
	What is the Mass Media?		Croteau & Hoynes, Ch. 1
Wed. 7/4	<b>FOURTH OF JULY HOLIDAY</b>		
Thu. 7/5	Video: "Orwell Rolls in His Grave"		
	Discussion of Video		
	Structure and Agency		Croteau & Hoynes, Ch. 2
Fri. 7/6	Research Methods: Content Analysis		Neuman (Handout)
	Reading the Media		

Day/Date	Topic	Assignment	Readings
<b>Week 2: Democracy, Politics and the Mass Media</b>			
Mon. 7/9	Media Politics		Croteau & Hoynes, Ch. 3
	Versions of Democracy		Chomsky, pp. 9–65
Tue. 7/10	Reporting the News		Croteau & Hoynes, Ch. 4
	A Look at the News: Current Events in Media Research and Practice		
Wed. 7/11	Ideology		Croteau & Hoynes, Ch. 5
	Propaganda		Chomsky, pp. 69–100
Thu. 7/12	Inequality		Croteau & Hoynes, Ch. 6
	Path Dependence		McChesney, Ch. 1
Fri. 7/13	Bureaucracy and Professionalism		McChesney, Ch. 2
	Reading the Media		

*"The basis of our governments being the opinion of the people, the very first object should be to keep that right; and were it left to me to decide whether we should have a government without newspapers or newspapers without a government, I should not hesitate a moment to prefer the latter. But I should mean that every man should receive those papers and be capable of reading them."*

*~Thomas Jefferson*

Day/Date	Topic	Assignment	Readings
<b>Week 3: Advertising, Economics and the Mass Media</b>			
Mon. 7/16	Meaning in the Media		Croteau & Hoynes, Ch. 7
	Framing Stories		McChesney, Ch. 3
Tue. 7/17	Advertising Policy		McChesney, Ch. 4
	Advertising Practice		Kilbourne, Intro, Ch. 1, 2
Wed. 7/18	Video: "War Made Easy"		Croteau & Hoynes, Ch. 8
	Mid-Term Evaluation		
Thu. 7/19	Discussion of Video		McChesney, Ch. 5
	Hegemony		
	A Look at the News: Current Events in Media Research and Practice		
Fri. 7/20	Relationships		Kilbourne, Ch. 3, 4, 5
	Reading the Media		

Day/Date	Topic	Assignment	Readings
<b>Week 4: Social Change, Technology and the Mass Media</b>			
Mon. 7/23	Video: "Bill Moyers Keynote Address, 2007 National Conference for Media Reform"		Croteau & Hoynes, Ch. 9
	Media Technology		McChesney, Ch. 6
Tue. 7/24	Advertising and Addiction		Kilbourne, Ch. 6, 7, 8
	Social Movements		McChesney, Ch. 7
Wed. 7/25	Globalization and the Media	Book Review Due	Croteau & Hoynes, Ch. 10
	Content Analysis		
Thu. 7/26	Alienation		Kilbourne, Ch. 9, 10, 11
	A Look at the News: Current Events in Media Research and Practice		
Fri. 7/27	Countering Advertising's Effects		Kilbourne, Ch. 12, 13
	Reading the Media	Content Analysis Due	

"Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

*~Article 19 of the United Nations  
 Universal Declaration of Human Rights*

Day/Date	Topic	Assignment	Readings
<b>Week 5: Wrapping Up</b>			
Mon. 7/30	Book Panels: <i>Fighting for Air</i>	Panel Presentations	
	Course Evaluation		
Tue. 7/31	No Class		

**Student Engagement and Success:**

The faculty and administration at Delta State University are committed to assisting all students achieve success while at DSU and in their future careers. The following resources are available to students to help them improve their study habits and skills. We encourage you to take full advantage of these resources:

**Roberts-LaForge Library**

Reference Desk: (662) 846-4431

**Writing Center**

Bailey Hall 211, (662) 846-4088

**Academic Support Lab**

H. L. Nowell Union 311, (662) 846-4654

**Office of Information Technology**

Bailey Hall 114, OIT Help Desk: (662) 846-4444

**Technology Learning Center**

Ewing Hall 130, (662) 846-4444

**Office of Career Services**

H.L. Nowell Union 300, (662) 846-4646